Kouji Seo

#233: Secret Voice

A town where you live

The story so far...
Haruto, a junior in college originally from Hiroshima, now lives with his girlfriend Yuzuki in Tokyo. But now, Yuzuki's former student from her days teaching at a cram school has moved in next door. Chisa-chan is a high school girl in a band, and now she has a crush on Haruto!!
Hmm. So Chisa-chan is doing band practice every day then.
Yeah, she says their last concert's gonna be in September, then they're breakin' up.
Okay. Then I guess we'll have to deal with a little bit of noise for a while.
Pfh
P!
Bwaammm

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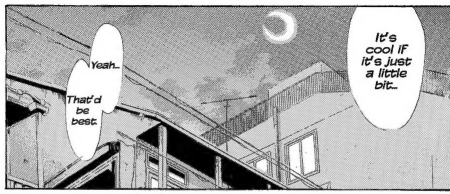
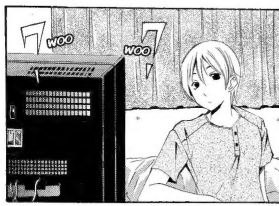

It's cool if it's just a little bit...
Yeah...
That'd be best.


WOO
WOO

Fshh

Hey, Haruto-kun, what did you think of the fish and veggies?
I think maybe I put too much mirin in, and they came out a little too sweet.
Hm? I didn't think so.

...hm?
You're gettin' really good at cooking.
It was good.
C'mon, I'm no pro.
Woohoo! I got props from a pro chef!!
...!
Hm...
...If things could stay like this for good...
It'd be nice...

Wh-
grab
....
FWUMP
...Well that's just a given, ain't it?
We're gonna be together Forever.
.....
Yeah.

squeeze
Wha-Why?!
Ah, sorry, but wait just a sec!
...!

Um... It's not that I don't want to...
But didn't Miyu-chan say a bit ago...
Hm?
You know, that I get really loud...
...She said all the neighbors can hear me...
...Oh
That's right.
There's no way we can let Chisa-chan hear us like that...
...But I really don't know if I can keep my voice down...
Hmm
.....
Aw, it'll be fine, right?
She's been playin' guitar for ages, anyhow.
Durrrrn
...!!
I don't think she can hear us in the middle of practice, y'know...
Durrrrn
...!!
Durrrrn

Okay then..?
..Yeah
So..
Uh huh..
Uh..
?!
SHOCK
Just a little peek of a navel, so sexy!
♫
Fwsh

What is with this song, anyhow?
baclum
baclum
That scared me...
Drrn
Navel, navel...
Sexy navel...
Drrn

Waver-ing in the soft winds...
twang
Okay...

Eh, it's fine, though...
If she keeps practicin' like this...
!!
Y-yeah.
You're right.
!!

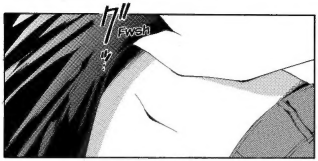
Waver-ing in the soft w-twang
...Yeah

Waver-ing in the-
TWANG

Wa-
twang
Waver-ing in the soft wind....
Wav-
twang
TWANG
...

JUST PLAY ALREADY !!
YOU'RE DIS-TRAC-TIN' ME !!

Um... I guess we should stop, then?
N-no, I'm fine, I'm just fine!!
Are you ?


Eww!

Okay, focus... Gotta focus...
Gotta get things back on track...

Navel, navel... ♫
Sexy navel... ♫
Ignore it, I gotta ignore it...

Her short black hair wavering in the soft wind... ♫
I thought we'd be friends forever, when I started to be with you.. ♫
I thought this time things would last... ♫
But out of no-where came that long haired home-wrecker... ♫
She's always, always stealing my boyfriends!!
You told me you'd always love me, too, you big liar!!

What the heck kinda scary song are you writing?!
That long-haired man-stealer with her sexy sexy navel and her lying bastard of a man!!
♫
.....
ﾌﾟｼｭｰ
DEFLATE

..Oh well.
Looks like she's done practicing..
I guess we really should stop now, huh..?

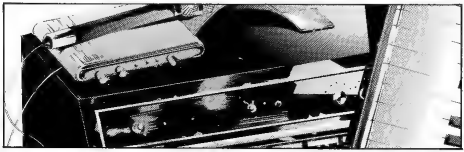
.....

N-No..
But..
..All right.

DEATH!!
Ha-ru-so-kun..
DEATH!!
Um.. I'm..
Don't worry about it! It's just a song!!
Yeah but what about "Death" ?
I'm sure she's just sayin' random stuff !!
DEATH!!

...Well, I can't say no to that face...
All right...
Flush
Here we go?
Well then...
FWIP
Wh-?!
For today, it's just your turn, Haruto-kun.
Huh?

Now just make sure to...
...keep your voice down, all right...?
Wa-
Yu-zu-



.....
Yeah... I really think the hook's missing some-thing...

Hmm.
BRRUUM

Woah!!
!

What was that...
Was that Kirishima-san's voice...?

...From here on out, why don't you try to keep it down?

W-wait just a sec...

Aw!
That was way too loud, come on!
B-but, Doin' that to me outta the blue, I'm gonna make some noise!

?!
BAM
BAM
BAM
Kirishima-saaan!!
...?
tmp
tmp
KCHK
H-Hi_
What's up?
What's up with you sensei?
You seem like you're in a hurry.
A hurry? No- not really no..

U-Uh... Sup?
Hey, w-
Oh... That's right, Kirishima-saaan!
Hm?
Are you not feeling well?
Uh... Well... Kinda...
...Uh... Well my gut hurt all of a sudden... That's why...
Oh?! Your stomach is bothering you? That's why you made that noise?!
Uh huh...
Oh, wait! What was that noise!!
That "Whoa!!" That was you, right Kirishima-san?!

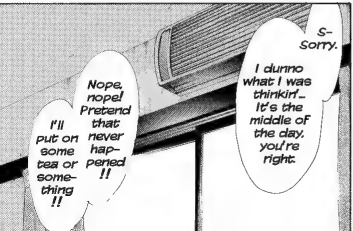
THAT PAINFUL, YET SAD, YET HAPPY SOUND...
WHAT A LOVELY CRY IT WAS!
IT TRULY WAS A MAN'S CRY!
AND NOW IT WILL HELP A HIGH SCHOOL BAND GIRL WITH SUPER POWERS OF AUDIO ANALYSIS GET OVER A CRISIS OF MUSICAL MIND BLOCK!
Uh... Yeah?
.....
...OR WILL IT?
I really think that would sound great in the hook for the song I'm working on right now!!
Sorry, but could you just make that one more time so that I can record it?!
....
Wha- but why?
Then how can I make you make it?! That "Whoa!!"
No way...
I can't do it now.
I'd rather die than do it again...
TO BE CONTINUED!!

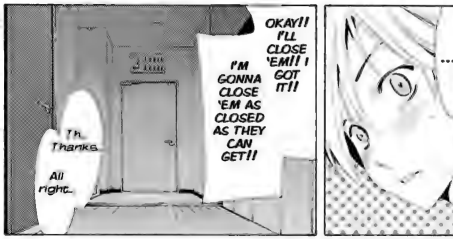
A town where you live
Oh! Summer!
Beautiful Year!
#234: Stuck in a rut?!
Kouji Seo

H..Hey, what's going on, Haruto-kun..
In the middle of the day?

The story so far...
Haruto is a college student from Hiroshima who's living with his girlfriend Yuzuki in Tokyo. Their neighbor Chisa-chan has been in the way for a while, so today Haruto is in love mashing mode!
.....
Ah..
..Uh

I know.. But.. Since Chisa-chan moved in, we haven't really..
..done it, at all...
But in the middle of the day, she's off at school, so... I was...


S-Sorry.
I dunno what I was thinkin'... It's the middle of the day, you're right.
Nope, nope! Pretend that never happened!!
I'll put on some tea or something!!



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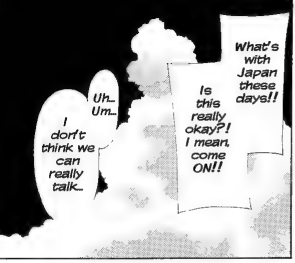
Wh...
HUHH? THEY'RE NO GOOD ?!
AHAHAHA!! THOSE LYRICS ARE TERRIBLE !!
...was that...
Chisa-chan?
Oh... Right. It's Saturday, isn't it?
Come on in, come on in!! I have some really good cake!!
Oooh! I'm comin' in, then!!
....
...
Uh... You wanna go... to a hotel? I mean, if it's just once in a while...
It's the middle of the day, so it should be cheap.
Hm...

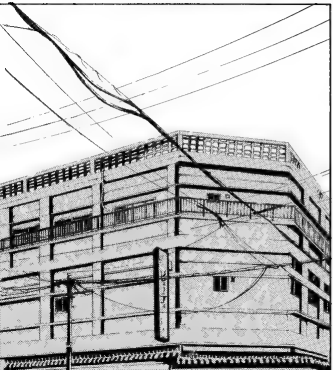
OK..
.....

VACANCY

NO VACANCY
VACANCY
STAY
FULL
02:00 ~ 12:00
CLOSE


Uh... Um... I don't think we can really talk...
Is this really okay?! I mean, come ON!!
What's with Japan these days!!
This is the dumbest...
....

Le... Let's just try one more !!
Having things go this bad is just makin' me want to do this even more...!



...OK.
Sure...

I mean, it's nice that they've got a vacancy and all, but I didn't think...
VACANCY
Huhh...
...It'd be this beat up.
...Uh huh.
Well, I...
I'm good if you're good...
...So what do you say?
Uh... I'm...
I'm good if you're good...

We're good...?
...Well then.

Yeah, we're good...
.....

This place is totally spooky, like a ghost could pop out at any moment...
No wonder no one took it...
.....
But man...

Oh, I'm gonna go take a shower!
Walking around for so long, I got all sweaty!
Uh... OK.
Got it.
KCHK

What were they thinkin', decorating this place with that...
Even that hanging scroll's totally freaky...

Mmm?
KA THUNK
KA THUNK

Huh ?!
Ha-ru-to-kuuun !!
DASH!!
Wh-what's wrong, Yuzuki !!
Did you see a ghost or something ?!
N_No!! There was a cock-roach in the bath, and it hissed at me!!
Augh!! Nooo!!
clatter
thump
Woah !!
A ton came out !!

Nah... Nobody coulda done it in a place like that.
...I'm sorry.
We finally found a room, and then...

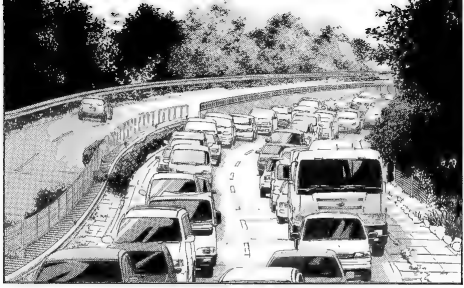
Huh?
I know, let's go to Rin's place, then!!
Oh!

May-be? No way!!
Oh, right.
May-be not, huh...
May-be not, huh...
W-Calm down a sec! I can't do it in my girl-friend's sister's room!
Plus, your brother could come home any-time...!

She's got work today...
...and she gave me a spare key!
IF we go now, we'll be just Fine!

Oh yeah! I've got enough rental car points for a Freebie!!
We can drive out a bit and look for a hotel outside the city!!
skrrr
Yeah!
That's a great idea!
skrrr

Ah!



TRAFFIC JAM 2 km

.....
.....

A traffic jam...
...Yup.
A pretty huge traffic jam.

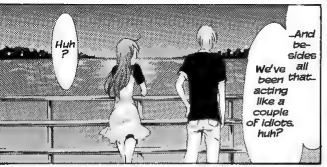
Woah, why are you all sweaty?!
....
...But hey.
Once we get through this, we'll be close to Kanagawa, and then...
...I gotta go to the bathroom...
...I kinda...
A...are you all right?! You've gone totally pale!!
B-but... We don't know where anything is around here, we can't get off now!
Huh?!
Oh. Uh... Well...
Okay, then let's get off here!! Your face is turning blue!!
A-All right!!
Uh... No...
Can't you hold it for just a little while?!
...My bad...

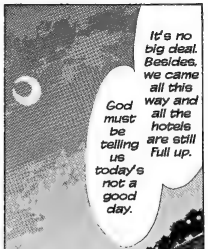
FSHHHH
P
P

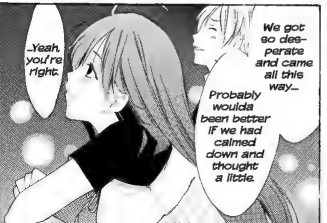
So where is it?
Uhhh... The ocean somewhere around Kanagawa, I guess.

Yeah...

Sorry about all that... I can't believe we ended up here because I had to go to the bathroom...
.....

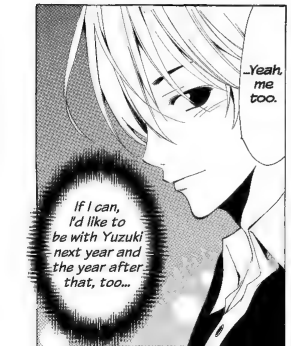

Huh ?
...And besides all that... We've been acting like a couple of idiots, huh?


It's no big deal. Besides, we came all this way and all the hotels are still full up.
God must be telling us today's not a good day.
Huh. Yeah.


...Yeah, you're right.
We got so desperate and came all this way...
Probably would've been better IF we had calmed down and thought a little.

But look! Aren't those stars pretty?!

Yeah... Not as nice as the ones in Okinawa last year, but they're real pretty.

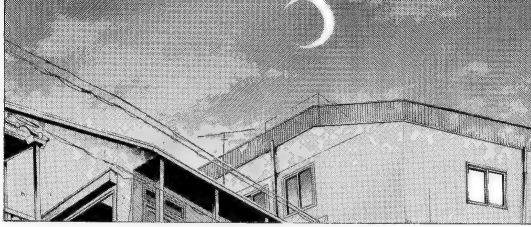


I hope we'll be together...
For ever and ever and ever!
She was thinking the same thing as me...
...huh.
I really love this girl, don't I....
Ahhh... I really do....
...Way back then.
Ever since...
....So.
Well, y'see...
I feel like I'll never find another person I love as much as I love her...
...Um...
Oh... Uh. How do I say this...
What's the matter?
...?

.....
Wh..
..get mar-ried...
Maybe you and I should...

Uh..
How do I put it..
I mean, we don't have to go do it right now!! I mean in the future, y'know..
..Ah!
I was just..
I was thinkin' about how I wanna stay with you forever, too..
?!
Ah! I'm sorry!! Sayin' weird stuff outta the blue..!!
It was too heavy, wasn't it? Sorry !!
Noo.. That's not it..
plip
plip

I'm just so hap-py...
I've kind of been hoping you would ask me for so long...
I'm glad...
to hear that...
FSHH
Yu-zu-ki...
.....



I can't wait!
Hm?
When we get there, let's get some-thing to eat!

Man, I'm kinda beat.
Yeah.
But it was a good time!

Chi-sa-chan.
Where are you off to so late at night..?

Oh, Kirishima-san. Eba-sensei!
Welcome hoome!

Chisa, we gotta hurry! The bus is gonna come!
Oh... You're right!
One of the seniors from the band asked me to come to a show.
so we're taking the overnight bus to Osaka! We're going to be back early in the morning on Monday!
Well then. See you later!!
Oh... Yeah... Be careful out there.
Okayyy !!
Hey, hey, Kirishima-san's really hot!
Eek
I know, right?!
Eek
I... I'm still not gonna lose to her!!
But Ebasensei is super beautiful!
.....
.....
In the end... it might been better just to stay at home, huh?
...I guess so.
Well... That's fine. I mean, she won't be back 'til Monday.
I'm all tired now, so let's just get some rest.

Woah! What's up, all of a sudden?
HUG
BECAUSE HARUTO THINKS DAYS LIKE THESE WILL LAST FOR-EVER, HE WENT AHEAD AND PRO-POSED ?!
HERE'S TO THEIR FUTURE TOGE-THER !
No...
I really can't wait any longer...
...Uh.
...Ok...
I mean... if that's what you want...
...It is.
So...
TO BE CONTINUED!!

A town where you live
#235: Tokyo Decisions
Kouji Seo

A town where you live
It's Akane-chan, with a real down expression!
...Sigh.
Hey. What's the matter, Akane?
It's pretty weird to see you sittin' in a place like this starin' into space.
...Haruto.

I have a lot on my mind too, you know..
It's already fall of our junior year..
I feel pretty lost, too..
I got no idea what I want to do in the future..
.....
The story so far..
Haruto is a college student from Hiroshima who's living with his girlfriend Yuzuki in Tokyo. Pretty soon now, he's gonna have to start seriously looking for a job!
What, you thinkin' about job search stuff?
Well..
Yeah, I guess..
..Hey, you want to go out for a bit after this?
We haven't been out for a drink in a while.
Huh? Yeah, that sounds all right..

Huh?
I just thought you'd understand, y'know...
If it's job search stuff you wanna talk about, it doesn't have to be me, y'know...
Well then, why'd you invite me out for drinks?

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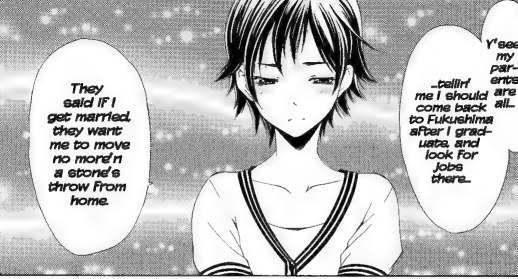
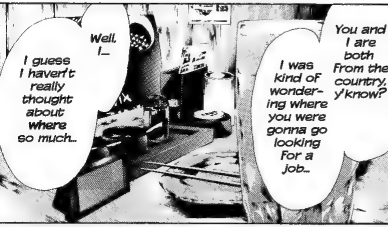
That reminds me, how is it going?
You've already started looking, right?
Hm? Oh, yeah. I went and applied to intern at like ten places, but I didn't get any bites off it...
Huh? Really? Are internships that tough to get?
...Looks like it. It's kind of bumming me out.
So what's going on with you?
Has your job search been goin' well?
Welllll... Actually, about that...
.....
Wha?
I guess my college softball play's been good enough...
A few companies scouted me... Apparently they've got women's softball teams.
The heck... You call your ex out just to brag about that?
N... no!!


They said if I get married, they want me to move no more'n a stone's throw from home.
Y'see, my parents are all... ...talkin' me I should come back to Fukushima after I graduate, and look for jobs there...


Well, I... I guess I haven't really thought about where so much...
I was kind of wondering where you were gonna go looking for a job...
You and I are both from the country, y'know?

Ah...
Is... Is that so...

.....
Is that so...

Yeah, I feel like I'd like to go back to Hiroshima someday... I got no solid plans, though.
I mean, well...

Yeah, but you'd be happy no matter where you are, as long as you're with Yuzuki-chan!
You're such a Fool for love!

-Wh-

Yeah, well, as long as you can play softball, you'd live anywhere!
You're a Fool for softball!!!
Man, how many times I got to tell you it's rude to point, huh?!
I just don't think I'm good enough at softball to make a living with it!!
Whaa ?!

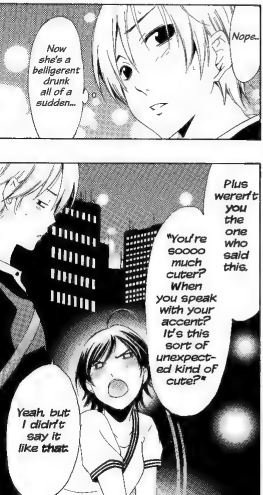
.....
Can you turn softball into just another hobby?
IF you really feel that way, then go back to Fukushima and get a job!
ngh
Wh.
WHY'RE YOU SAYIN' SUCH A TERRIBLE THING TO ME?
TH' REASON I'M FREAKIN' OUT IS COS I'M NO GOOD AT SOFTBALL. BUT I LOVE IT. GOSH DARNIT!! WAHHHHH!!
SLAM
Wai... No, don't cry !!
YA BIG OL' JERK !!
I'm sorry, all right !!

She's a weepy drunk, I guess....
...This chick...

Yeah, she's fine, she's just fine!!
Um, is she okay?
Waiter: gimme another brown sugar umeshu 'n soda please !!

RIFYNCH
She's fine, she's just fine!!
Um, Sir..?
Stop sayin' that kinda stuff!!
Wahhh!! You woman-izer, you!!

Whew! I sure drank a lot!!
Looks like I'm preeetty wasted, aren't I?!
Hey, quit makin' so much noise in the middle of town.
Plus, your accent's slipping...


Nope...
Now she's a belligerent drunk all of a sudden...
Plus, weren't you the one who said this,
"You're soooo much cuter? When you speak with your accent?" It's this sort of unexpected kind of cute?"
Yeah, but I didn't say it like that.

HUH?! CAN'T A CHICK FROM FUKUSHIMA TALK IN IWAKI DIALECT? WHAT'S WRONG WITH IT??
YOU WANNA START A FIGHT ABOUT IT?! HUH, HIROSHIMA??

....
Hm?

I didn't say that either.
I guess THAT'S why I don't gotta boy-friend!! Cos I ain't cute at all, right?!
Oh. Fine then !!

How many times I gotta tell you to pay attention!?
Hey. I can see your panties.
Huh?
WHAT?
.....
You said that same thing to me right after we met, you know.
You're a real gross pervert, y'know?
Wh.. I was just lettin' you know..

Mm?
Ah… Yeah, that's true…
It's been four years since then
Feels like it went by so fast…

…since Kyousuke died
It's been four years…

Yeah…
It has…
…

I wanna be a motorcycle racer.
So then be how I practice

We went to the racetrack with him a lot…
The three of us…
Uh huh

Givin' up without even tryin'?
That's the lamest thing of all time.
Yeah... He talked about it all the time.
Man... He was really tryin' hard to be a racecar driver...
...That's what he'd say.
I wonder if he'd be a motorcycle racer today...
If he were still alive...
Who knows? Reality isn't as easy as all that, y'know...
But if nothing else, he wouldn't have given up on it, don't you think?
....

.....

Yeah, you're right...

Great idea! Your treat, right, boss?
Hahaha! Let's go to the next place!

Huuh? Well then, I won't go at all!!
Don't be an idiot, we're splitting it, splitting it!

squeeze
Just like you said, Haruto...
I'm a Fool For soft-ball !!

Huh ?
...I really am a Fool, aren't I?

....
A-su-ka...

I can't believe you said all that with your panties hangin' out.
Hey!

I'm gonna keep at it a bit longer, I think.
I want to be true to myself!
Just like Kyousuke.

Don't do that!!
I'ma tell Yuzuki-chan, see if I don't!!
How long're you gonna keep lookin'?! You perv!!
I love Yuzuki...
Being true...
...to yourself...?
That's why I followed her all the way to Tokyo...
Well then...
....

The town where...
...she lives...
I'm going to do the best I can in this city...

I was just thinkin' maybe I'm a fool, too.
...Nah.
Hm?
What's up with you, going all lovey-dovey like that?
HARUTO'S WILL TO SUCCEED IN TOKYO, THE TOWN WHERE YUZUKI LIVES, HAS BEEN COMPLETELY RENEWED !!
Sh... Shut up!!
Huh? What you only just now realized that?
THIS IS NO TIME TO HESITATE !!
YOU'VE GOT TO TURN AND FACE TOMORROW AND KEEP MOVING FORWARD !!
Hey. Whatever. let's go to another place!
We can celebrate my future as a Japan all-star!
Like that'll ever happen!!
You'll be lucky to be a bench-warmer!!
...Ngh w...wa...
Wh!! No, don't cry!! It was a joke, that's all!!
...TO BE CONTINUED!!

A town where you live

The story so far...
Haruto is a junior in college from Hiroshima, who lives in Tokyo with his girlfriend, Yuzuki. He's just gotten home from a long, tough day at work.
Ahhh... I'm super beat.
Man, this part-time job is killin' me. I really need to get a raise...
TMP
TMP
TMP
Like they'd gimme one...
201
Kirishima
桐島
Every-body's dealin' with the recession right now.
BAM!
Wah !!

This is a work of fiction. Any resemblance to an existing person, place, or thing is purely coincidental.

...!

Rin-chan.
R-

What a pain!!
Oh, just shut up already!! I'm getting really tired of you always treating me like a sister!!

Just wait a min-ute, Rin!!

You are my sister!! What's wrong with that?!
OF course I treat you like a sister!!

I don't think of you that way...
Huh?
I don't...
...think of you as my big sister!!

Hi... hey! Rin-chan!!
Dash!

...!!

TAP
TAP
TAP...

Um..
Did something happen?
..It's all right.
It's really nothing. We just had a little bit of a fight. that's all.
Well.. Wait. It didn't really look like a little fight to me..
If you want, you can lean on me, you know. If you want to tell someone, I'm here.
....
..Thank you.
But this is something that has nothing to do with you, Haruto-kun.
Oh.. All right.
Sorry about that..

What she said yesterday, that was just too cruel.
Well... It was probably just a regular fight that got outta hand, but still...

...think of you as my big sister !!
I don't...

I mean, even IF you're fighting...
...there's things you can and can't say, yeah?

That's got to have hurt her a lot to hear...
I mean, Yuzuki really thinks of her as her little sister...

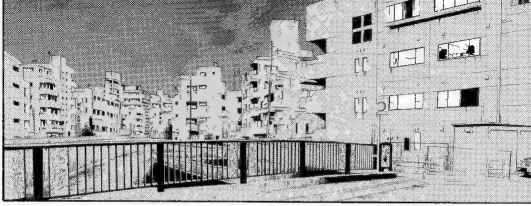
.....
Mm.
Maybe I'll go talk to her just a little before work...
ding dong
ピンポーン
Eba
枝葉
303
枝葉
103
13
Hm.
No one home?
She's usually home this time of day, though...
KACHK
ガチャ

What are you doing mumbling in front of my door like that?
That's pretty creepy, don't you think?
Oh... Okay.
Well, I guess that's...
Wh!
?!
Hey!! What're you thinkin', openin' the door dressed like that?!
I was changing clothes.
I saw that it was you before I opened the door, you know.
What did you come here for?
Wait. No! That's still no good !!

....
so I don't have a lot of time to talk to you.
I'm about to go out.
Huh?
It's about that fight yesterday...
Oh, what was it that I said...?
.....
I don't know what it was all about...
But don't you think what you said was just a little too cruel?
You said you don't think of her as a sister...
Oh, hm.
Even IF you're fighting, you can't just say something like that!
Maybe you're not related by blood, but you know Yuzuki truly thinks of you as her little sister...

If we were related by blood...
...maybe we'd understand each other a bit better.
.....
....
You know, Haruto-san, when you lie, you always avert your eyes...
I only just realized it.
Wha?!
This isn't workin', is it... I gotta get them to make up somehow...
W...well, Yuzuki regretted it, you know? She was all "I went a little too far with Kin..."
What the heck...
It wasn't just one of those fights you have for no real reason, was it?
It's got nothing to do with you, Haruto-san.

All right, you should go home now.
I'm very busy, you know!
No... but!
Man, pretty much everybody I know says that same thing to me...
!!
No!
On the other hand...
You wouldn't happen to want to watch me change, would you?
Ugh. Fine whatever!! Just go do what you were doin'!!
Okayyy! I'll go do that, then!!



Real sisters... huh...

I don't think Yuzuki feels that way...

I think if we were related, we might fight even more!
But I guess we wouldn't have had the strain we had a long time ago.

...Huh?
I don't really think of you as my big sister, though.

I suppose it will take just a bit longer, perhaps...
I guess there's still a part of Rin-chan that just...
...doesn't feel that way about Yuzuki quite yet...
...I guess there's pro-bably...
A lot of things goin' on I don't really get...

It must be real hard for strangers to become true family...
...in just a few years...
TMP
カツン
TMP
カツン
KCHK
カチャ

Hey-
That's Rin-chan's voice-

JUST GIVE ME A BREAK ALREADY !!
SEE. I HAVE NO IDEA WHY YOU KEEP HARPING ON THAT!! WHY?!

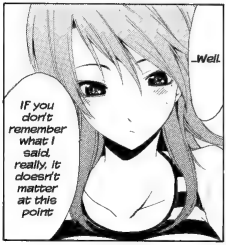
-was it coming here to start the fight again??
That thing she was going to do-

grip
It's looking pretty bad, isn't it-
I really should go and stop them-

Why aren't you listening to me?! How many times do I have to say it?!
Didn't I already say that that was a bad idea?!
You're telling me! I'm the one who's repeating myself!
Besides, you were the one who came to me for advice, weren't you?!
So why are you only taking your own ideas into account?!!
Well... That's true, but...
What the heck are they talking about...?
Oh. That's right, on another topic, Haruto-san came by today.
He wanted to know what we've been fighting about.
Wh?!
Rin, you didn't tell him anything, did you?!
.....
Of course I didn't, what do you think...?

Like I'd tell him we were fighting over what to get him for his birthday...
!

That's okay, then... Did he say anything else about it...?
.....


...Well.
If you don't remember what I said, really, it doesn't matter at this point.

Huh... What did you say?
Oh... That's right...
He got mad at me...
...He said that what I said was too cruel, even if we were having a fight.

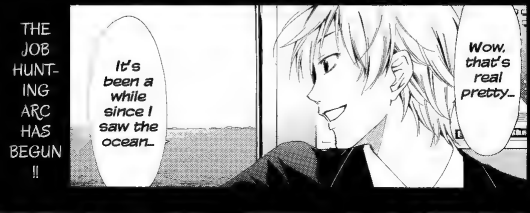
When I said "I don't think of you as my sister..."
That was a lie.
...I'm sorry.
Hey, what're you crying about? Stop being weird!
Sh-Shut up! I'm not crying!!
...You'd never say something like that seriously, would you?
Well, I knew that... I mean, of course it was a lie...
...!

Oh. For... Well, you gotta get him a necklace for his birthday present, all right?
Don't get cocky just cos I apologized!
I told you. I'm gonna get him a dress shirt, all right?!
Haruto-kun hates stuff like that!! He didn't even want me to get my ears pierced!!

THE MORE THEY FIGHT, THE BETTER THEY GET ALONG !!

CASE CLOSED !!

A town somewhere you live
Clackety
Clack
Clackety
Clack


THE JOB HUNTING ARC HAS BEGUN !!
It's been a while since I saw the ocean...
Wow, that's real pretty...

So now I gotta get it all started!
Joint Companies Informational Meetin
I made the decision to get a job in Tokyo.
...but
Fwip
I'm not here to have fun today...
Clackety Clack
AJob Fair...?
I bet there's gonna be a few hundred people there...
Clackety Clack

A town where you live

#237 Job Fair

Kouji Seo

The story so far...

Haruto is a junior in college from Hiroshima, who lives in Tokyo with his girlfriend Yuzuki. It's about time for him to start looking for work, so he's come to this Job Fair. But the number of people has got him overwhelmed. Will he really be all right?

This is a work of fiction. Any resemblance to an existing person, place, or thing is purely coincidental.

With all these people here I'm havin' trouble figuring out what's where...
Tap
Tap
Tap
BAM
Whoa !!
Fwip
Fwip
Ow, oww !
Ah..! Sorry! Are you all right?
Not at all... I'm sorry...

Oh no, my hand-outs...
I-I'll help too !!

Huh... I guess these kinds of books exist.
It Begins With Self-Ana
A Job Search Man

It's a little bit danger-ous to be staring into space like that...
Every-one is pretty desperate here.

Um...
Oh sure, here !

Hm?
Oh... Maybe bumping into you is destiny of some kind.
It's very nice to meet you.
I guess I got a little overwhelmed by it all.
S... sorry about that.

A business card?
What's this thing...

We can exchange information about our job search experiences!
Please feel free to contact me any time at all.

MISA NAGATO
KEIKYO UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS
E-mail:misa-nagato@keikyo.ac.co.jp

Oh!
Well, I have a few more booths I'd like to look at, so I'll be leaving.
...I don't have a business card or anything...
Ah... Yes.
But...
TAP
TAP
TAP
Yeah... It seems like I really have...
.....
BUMP

Kodansha's informational meeting is now starting!!
...been underestimating this whole job search thing....
We're very sorry, but the meeting has reached capacity!!

I'm Feelin' totally over-whelmed by all these people...
Ahhh...
It's no good...

Excuse me, I am Miss Nagato, a third year in the department of economics at Keikyou University! May I ask a question?!

But man, that girl who gave me her card was amazing.
KEIKYO UNIVERSITY DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS
She's definitely goin' places...

TMP...?

I've really gotta get it together this afternoon.
Even someone from such a great school is working that hard...

Hey, sup...
...Ah.

Oh...?
You're that guy from be-fore...

Oh. I see... We're the same year, then.
I'm Kirishima. A junior at Seijo U.

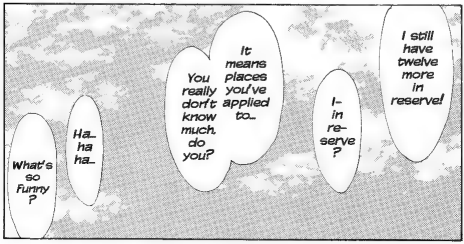
A break, huh...
What did you even come here for?!
I... I told you, I was just takin' a little bit of a break. I was about to get back in there...

Well, then, what are you doing out here, Kirishima-kun?
Oh... Well, the coffee-shops and stuff were all full...
So I had to take a break out here...

BRRRM
BRRRM
Oh... I've got an e-mail.
...Huh?
Oh. No way...
....
...Sigh
...Uh.
Some-thin' happen?
When you don't get the intern-ship...
...it's always written at the end of the email, you know?
"We wish you the best of luck in all your future job searching endeavours" or some-thing of the sort.
Oh. Just another "wish" for me...
A wish?

Hm... Oh well.

Oh, I've gotten those before... Didn't know you call it a wish.
Basically it means that you haven't gotten the job.


What's so Funny?
Ha... ha ha...
You really don't know much, do you?
It means places you've applied to...
I- in re- serve?
I still have twelve more in reserve!

...
...And at every one, you were right there, bang, your hand up, askin' a question!
I saw you at all the booths I went to today...

Hm... what is?
It was... Nagato, wasn't it?
I mean, it's pretty crazy impressive is all.

I was all like, I could never act like that, even if I really tried...
I feel like even the company employees were kinda surprised at how driven you were.

.....

I asked if you were making fun of me!
Huh ?!
No, I wasn't really makin' fun...
...Wh ?
Are you making fun of me...?

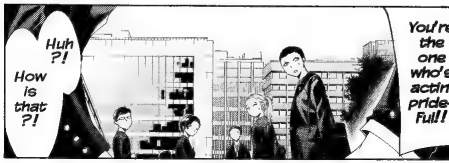
I mean, you go to Keikyo University, but you're still makin' business cards and runnin' around...
It's really amazin'! By the way, where d'you get those from, anyhow?
.....

I bet you think people who actually put in the effort to run around and make cards, people who are trying ...are totally out... ridiculous, or trying too hard, is that it?!
N... No, I wasn't really...
You think you're better than people who are actually working hard?
Scoffing and saying, "I could never do that, even if I tried"

You think that you can stand out by acting all cool and unaffected, is that it?
What?! No, I'm not doing that...!

People like you are the ones who are really laughable, in my opinion!!
Don't you think you're under-estimating the job search process?!
Wh...
What's this chick thinkin'?!
Yeah okay, I've been Foolin' around too much, but I ain't aloof!!
I was really gonna work hard this afternoon!!
Uh huh, it didn't really look like that to me.

I ain't thinkin' any such thing !!
IF you think that's a cool way to be, then you're dead wrong. I hope you know!
Yeah right, you were about to call the whole thing a boring wash and go home, I'm sure.

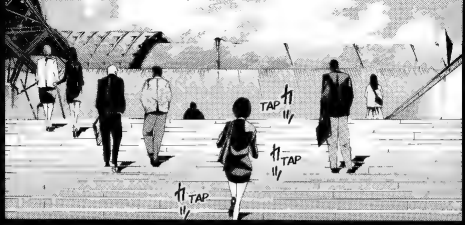

Huh ?!
How is that ?!
You're the one who's actin' pride-Ful!!

Wh..
I wasn't thinking that...
I was raised out in the boonies so I can't deal with places with a lotta people..
And talkin' in front of people makes me real anxious, too!
And just cos you can do all that stuff easy, you're making fun of me and braggin' on yourself about it!

You think everyone in the world is just like you?!
Cool, collected, and real good at job searching?!

....
Huh?

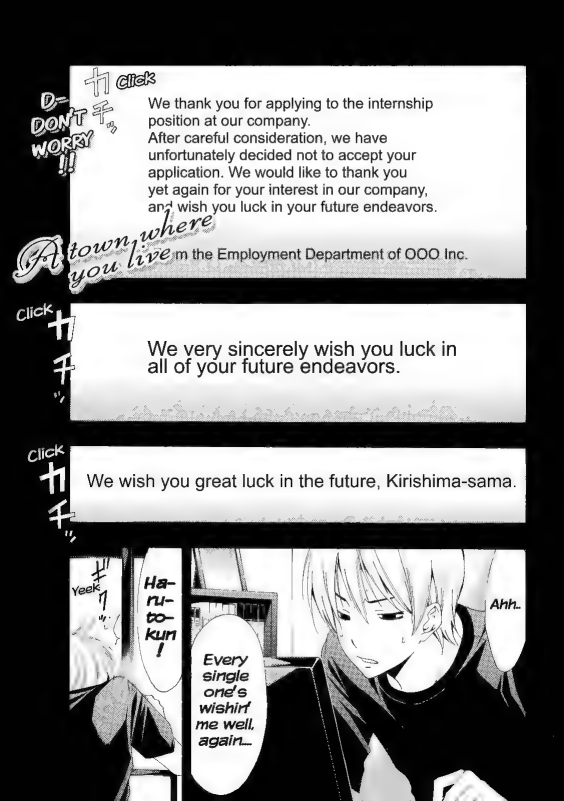
Wh... What are you even talking about right now?
You are acting silly...
Anyway... I'm quite busy, so!
Ah...



"THE TOWN WHERE YOU LIVE" JOB HUNT ARC IS UNDER WAY!

NAGATO, A PRETTY LADY WITH A REALLY STRONG SPIRIT, HAS SHOWN UP!!

LOOKS LIKE A STORM IS ON THE HORIZON!!!


Click
D-DON'T WORRY!!
We thank you for applying to the internship position at our company.
After careful consideration, we have unfortunately decided not to accept your application. We would like to thank you yet again for your interest in our company, and wish you luck in your future endeavors.
A town where you live
m the Employment Department of OOO Inc.
Click
We very sincerely wish you luck in all of your future endeavors.
Click
We wish you great luck in the future, Kirishima-sama.
Yeek!
Haru-to-kun!
Every single one's wishin' me well, again...
Ahh..

That reminds me, you'll hear back about the internships soon, won't you?
Did you get any good news?
Um... Well.
Not yet...
Oh, I see.
I hope one of them gives you a chance!
-Y-
Yeah...
I guess at a time like this...
KEIKYO UNIVERSITY ECONOMICS DEPARTMENT
I gotta suck it up, don't I?

The story so far... Haruto is a college junior from Hiroshima who lives in Tokyo with his girlfriend, Yuzuki. He's begun job searching and applied for internships, but so far has had no luck.

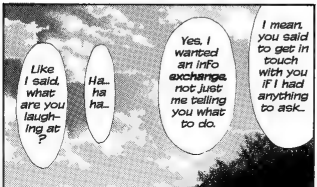
This is a work of fiction. Any resemblance to an existing person, place, or thing is purely coincidental.

Reach out and grab your dream.
A town where you live
#238: At Any Cost!
Kouji Seo

It's really quite pathetic. I hope you know.
And you were the one who said you'd absolutely get a job before I did...
Ha ha...
What are you laughing at? Look at me when I'm talking.

That's why I called. I thought you could give me some advice for how to job search and stuff...
Well, you see...

Your little heart gave out after just twenty places rejected you as an intern...
You really think you can get through your job search like that?


Like I said, what are you laughing at?
Ha... ha ha...
Yes. I wanted an info exchange, not just me telling you what to do.
I mean, you said to get in touch with you if I had anything to ask...

Well... At least I already had plans to meet with some of my more ambitious friends, today.
You can certainly ask them as many questions as you need to.
...Really, thanks a lot.
....
By the way, do you have these get-togethers on the regular or something?
Yes, once or twice a month or so. We trade information and tips and tricks for interviews.
Oh wow...
That's amazing, and you're still just a junior, too.
At any rate...
I would have liked it if you would have dressed a bit more appropriately...
Huh... But aren't we just going to a normal bar?
What?
.....

Hey... Isn't this place...
Mizumoto-senpai's family's Italian restaurant!

Huh... Woww...
If you play your cards right, you can make connections just by coming.
The prices are also very reasonable, so even people like you and I can afford to eat here.

I didn't know it had a star. Awesome, senpai...
I thought they probably only used top quality ingredients here, but, man...

I see... This place is so famous that even you've heard of it.
It's Italian Mizumoto, it has one Michelin star.
The chef-owner of this place has a lot of industry connections, and they often entertain clients and the like here, or so I hear.

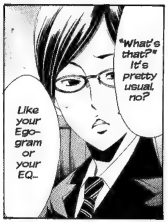
What?! Are you sure?!
Their results just weren't up to par..
Huh? But didn't they stop hiring through connections this year?

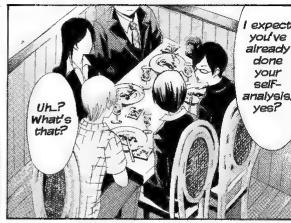
I never joined a club, you see, so I don't have connections like that.
Er. Hey!
May I come to the alumni visit with you?

Thanks! That should be a big help!
I'll ask them for you, at least.
Hmmm.. Having a non-club-member come. huh..

Yeah, so apparently, traditionally, our rugby club gets jobs at that company, so..
Oh, I see. That's why visits from former club members are so important.
I have a relative who works at Tozai Electric, and I feel like that's a connection I can get some use out of.

Wearin' suits, braggin' on their connections and all... I feel like I'm playin' handi-capped...
Dang... All these guys are totally on the ball and ambitious...
YEFF !!
Hey, Kiri-shima-kun!!
It'd be a waste to let it get cold...
Uh... Well... You see...
I went out of my way to bring you here, and you're not even saying anything!
Don't just sit there eating food!
Plus, I mean, I have no connec-tions worth bragging on...
Oh, For... I can't believe you !!

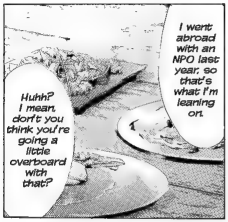

"What's that?" It's pretty usual, no?
Like your Ego-gram or your EQ...


I expect you've already done your self-analysis, yes?
Uh...? What's that?

Huh... You really gotta do that stuff?
Of course you do, they all want you to take them!!

If you don't have a grip on that, how can you possibly strategize for interviews?
You have to know what type of person you are, and apply that to your past to use it for interview appeal!

Hey, Nagato, what is with this guy... Does he have any ambition?
Sorry... I had no idea he was this useless of a person...


Huhh? I mean, don't you think you're going a little overboard with that?
I went abroad with an NPO last year, so that's what I'm leaning on.

Ah? You're treasurer, huh.? I plan the drinking parties for my club.
In my case. I'm the treasurer of my club, so I intend to use that as leverage.

Do you want everyone to think you're a completely useless human being?! Are you really okay with this?!
An interview..
I can't really sell myself like that, all pushy and stuff, y'know? I'm no good at it, really... I get all nervous and embarrassed...

Hm.. Are you?
Uh.. But I am in a club..

You need to be more nervous about this! You have no connections, you aren't in a club, what do you have?!
Chmp
Chmp
Chmp
And again you're eating! Are you going to do nothing but eat at this meeting?!!

Really?! About how many members does the club have?!
Tmp
Presi-dent?!
Outdoor club... I'm, uh, I'm the president.
Huhh? So then, what do you do?
Uh... I dunno. I think about forty or fifty... that sounds about right...
The previous president kinda forced me into it, though...
Said it'd help with the job search, too.
...
Woah. For real? That's really something, being presi-dent of that club, Kirishima!!
Oh... y'think?
I heard they have really good cooks in there!!
Wait, I feel like I've heard of that! Isn't Seijo U's outdoor club kind of famous?
What! what school?!
Uh... Sei-jo U...
What the heck! This guy's better than all of us!!

Thank you very much for coming to our restaurant today...

I'm the owner-chef, Mizumoto.
Have you enjoyed your meals this evening?

The rosemary sautee with the Black Iberian Pig had a delicate scent that really whet my appetite!
Oh yes! The saltiness of the prosciutto in the Italian Salad was perfectly matched to the acidity of the balsamic!!

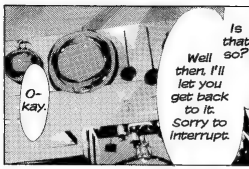
I'm Kirishima, the club president.
Ah...
It's very nice to meet you, sir.
By the way, were you talking about the Seijou U outdoor club just now...?
Thank you very much.

I think it'll end up working out.
No. It's fine.
I'm sorry about him. He pushed you into becoming president, didn't he?
Ah! You're Kirishima-kun! I've heard a lot about you from my son.

And once I got into it, it was really fun, too.
Haha, well I wasn't busy, you know.
...
She said you came and helped at our ocean place part-time.
Oh... That reminds me. Mama told me you also gave her a hand recently.

Oh, no... It's a meeting for people who are job searching, to compare notes...
By the way, is this a club meeting or just some such?

I owe you for all the help you've given my family, and I really must pay you back.
Oh really? Well, if there is anything I can do for you, just let me know. I'd love to help you out.


Is that so?
Well then, I'll let you get back to it. Sorry to interrupt.
O-kay.

Nah... Really, it's just enough to know I helped out.
Thank you very much.

Huh?
You- you You idiot!! need to make a better impression!!

Hm?
KATHUNK
Oh... That's right!

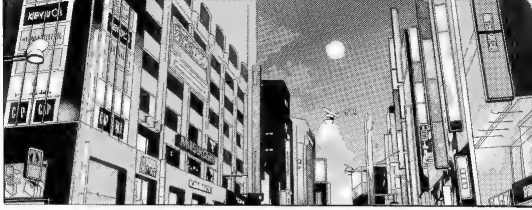
Wh?!
You sound like a little kid?!
What was that?! You've gotta be an idiot!!

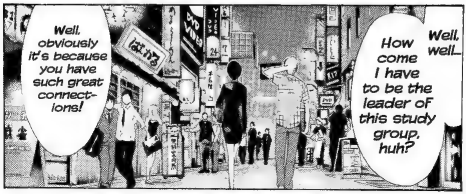
That's the kind of feeling that makes me the happiest to hear.
Ha ha.
Oh, well thank you!

Hm? What's the matter, guys?
....

Wah! What, what?!
K-Kirishima-kun!!

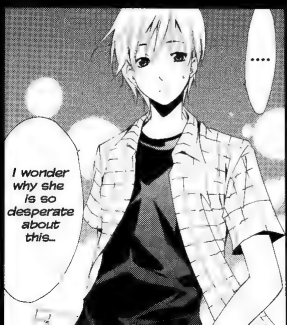
The food was...
All real real good!!

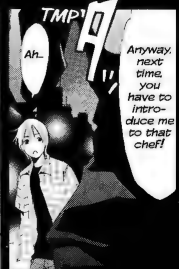



Well, well...
How come I have to be the leader of this study group, huh?
Well, obviously it's because you have such great connect-ions!

I knew there was a reason you were so calm about all this.
You were always laughing at me on the inside, weren't you? This four-eyed woman with no connect-ions...
I told you, I wasn't thinking that at all.
Besides, I don't think I'm gonna ask senpai's dad to do anything for me, anyway.

There's no such thing as cheating in a job search!
Do you want to end up unemployed in the end?
No matter what you have to do, IF you have a job at the end of it, it was the right thing to do!
Wh ?!
What are you saying? This is a rare chance for you!
Yeah, but stuff like that makes me feel weird. It feels like cheating...
....
I'm all for trying your best, but... There's a lot of time left, so maybe you should relax a little bit...
....
Um...





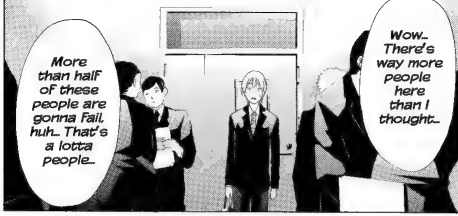
..TO BE CONTINUED!!

A town where you live
WOAHH!!
ALL RIGHT. YEAH !!
Haruto shouts late at night! But what's the reason...?!
Wh- what what?! What's going on, Haruto-kun?!
I passed the written part of the intern-ship application!
They're having me come in for a first inter-view next week !!

The story so far...
Haruto is a college junior from Hiroshima who lives in Tokyo with his girlfriend, Yuzuki. He's begun job searching and has applied for a lot of interviews. And now finally, he's passed the written portion for the first time!
Really?!
Oh...
You did it! Congrats, Haruto-kun!!
H-hey.
You applied to about fifty places, and finally got one! I'm so glad.
Yeah, but it's just a first interview. They're gonna cut the applicants down to less than half after this.
Well, you'll be just fine. I know it!
I feel like... Yeah, you'll be totally fine!!
You got no reason to feel that way...
It'll be fine!!

A town where you live

#239: Lies, all lies. Kouji Seo



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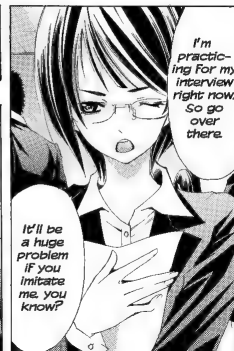
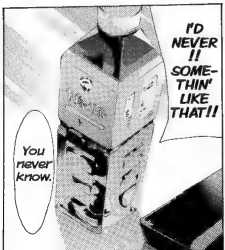
WHAT IS IT YOU WANT? COULD YOU NOT LOOK AT ME, PLEASE?
FWIP

Hey, Nagato! You got through, too! I'm glad to see ya.

Huh?

HUH?!


I'm practicing for my interview right now. So go over there.
It'll be a huge problem if you imitate me, you know?

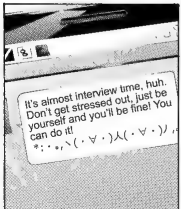

I'D NEVER!! SOMETHIN' LIKE THAT!!
You never know.

Anyway, here and now, the two of us are enemies, you know.
Don't act so friendly to me, hm? It's bothering me.

Wh...
What a jerk !!

Fwump
She's really givin' me a bad vibe.
I was just happy someone I knew was here and wanted to say hi, y'know!
What is with her, anyway.

Well then !! Go ahead and do the best you can, if you please !!
I was already going to, even without your say-so.

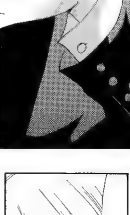

It's almost interview time, huh. Don't get stressed out, just be yourself and you'll be fine! You can do it!
:・,ヽ(・∀・)人(・∀・)ノ,・*:

brrrrrrm.
brrrrr.
Hm?

Yeah she's right...
I finally got an interview, after all...
This aint the time to be worryin' about pointless stuff.
Thanks! I'll do my best!!
Uedasan, please come here!
Ah!
Yes!!
I wonder if Nagato is done...
Badum
Badum
This ain't good... I guess I am a little nervous after all...
BAM
Eek!
Splish
Splish

Ah..!
Oh no..!!

Yes?
U..Um.. Pardon me..!!


....
What's she doin' now...

I acci-dentally spilled tea on my shirt..
Is there anywhere I could wash it out and dry off!?
I only have twenty minutes 'til my inter-view!!

Do you know if there's at least somewhere nearby to buy a shirt?
Wh.. But..
Could you ask someone else?
Uh.. I only work here part time, so I don't really know..

Excuse me, is there anyone here who knows?
..Um.

ANY-ONE...
AT ALL... UM...

tremble
tremble
tremble
WHAT DO I DO..
What size are you?
Wh?!
Tell me your-
-shirt size!

Uh....
..medium..
I think I saw a Uniclo on my way here, so I'll go get a shirt For you.
Huh ?
But you have your interview, too..
I'm after you..
KACHK
O..oh..
Thanks. You're a life-saver..
SLAM
It'll be Fine. just go and practice.
That Kirishima-kun goes after me...
It's so lucky..

Kiri-shima-saan!!
Haru-to Kiri-shima-saan!!
Is he not here?!
Then we're going onto the next in line!!

-Wh-

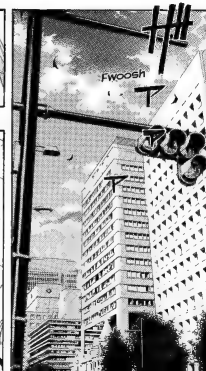
No way-

Here, I got it for ya, now hurry up and change!
B... but Kirishima-san, you-
Whatever, just do it, and fast!

tmp
tmp

I gotta figure out what I'm gonna tell Yuzuki about alla this...
Got 'er the shirt in time at least, but...

....


fwoosh

Eh- It's fine I'm sure.
It's just an internship...
Even if I got it, it don't mean I'd get a job at the company.

Kiri-shima-kun!!

Ah, my bad.
I totally forgot about that.

I asked you to wait, didn't I?!
Why did you just up and leave?!

Did ya want me for some-thin'?
I just wanted to pay you back for the shirt.
Ah, naw, it's fine. It wasn't all that expensive, really, so call it my treat.

Oh, I see...
You must always take care of money matters as soon as you can!
Absolutely not, I won't allow it.

Why did you go and do that...?
...And also, well...
...Um.

...Ohh.
But...
You didn't get to do your own interview...

...Hm?
Well... You know...

I'm doin' way better than I thought I was gonna do.
I don't wanna be the only one who gets a job, ya know.
-wh-
.....
You're such a liar-
It ain't a lie!
I had a great talk with one of the inter-viewers !!
-oh really.

Yeah, yeah. I got it.
H-hey, next time we go to that restaurant, you really need to introduce me to the chef!
You pro-mise?!
Ah...
OK, I'm goin' this way.
Later.
Be careful on your way home.
See ya.
And also. Um.. IF you get any good info on job searching, you've got to tell me, all right?!
I said wait just a second!!
Ah!
I don't got any more info than you, y'know?
What is it? You're so stub-born..
.....

...Uh.
Woah, what's all this?
Are you feelin' okay?
I... I'm fine!!
I just don't want to be in your debt; that's all!!
Just so you know, tomorrow we'll be enemies again!!
Don't get any funny ideas, okay?!
...All right, okay...
Are you making fun of me?!
I told you I ain't...
...TO BE CONTINUED!!
Thank you...
...So much for today...
Nagato expresses her true gratitude... Are they finally friends now?

Kouji Seo
I wish the summer would last forever...
A town where you live
#240 switch

...Time goes by, and now it's already February!!

Yuu Yura is a teenage junior from elementary who lives in Tokyo with his parents and sister. He one of them are passing his best friend Kiyomi. If it's her place, he reluctantly married his wife's home after she became pregnant.

303

由良 YURA

Huhh. so this is your new place?

It's a nice place. real spacious.

It is!

Yeah. well. It was a little spendy, but I figured we gotta have somethin' at least this big if we're gonna have a kid in here.

Yeah.. We got all the furniture from Kiyomi's parents' place.. They said it's a wedding gift.

Oh.. That's right. don't Asakura's parents live pretty close to here..?

Ah. That's right.
What should I call her now, I wonder.
FLAIL FLAIL
Wehehe you're makin' me blush, hearin' that...
Haruto-kun, it's not Asakura anymore, now is it?
She's Kiyomi Yura-san now.
Got it.
Don't follow him up on that, okay?
"Mrs. Yura" is fine too.
Asakura is fine. I'm more used to that anyways.
Ah! I'm sorry, I wasn't thinking at all!
I'll do that, you just sit down, okay?
I'm fine, it's not like I'm an invalid.
You have a seat, yourself.

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Yes, they said it would be mid-February, so we've got about a week left.
But you've gotten pretty big, haven't you?
The due date's almost here, isn't it?

....
ドン
FWUMP
Wha?!
As IF I'd let you.
I'm not letting you in the room.

Hey, so I bought a video camera for it!
With this, I'm gonna get all of Kiyomi's delivery on film!

See, it's because you say stuff like that. It's already grossing me out.
G... Gross you out?!
It's not like I'm comin' in 'cause I'm into it, or anything, not at all!!
Why?! Why? Why can't I come in?!
Quit flailing around Takashi-kun, you'll kick up dust!

....
How's that?
I'm totally and completely together!!
I can't believe a guy like you is gonna be a dad... You need to pull yourself together already...

Then you already know if it's a boy or a girl?
Oh... He did, huh?
H... Hey.
You know, Takashi-kun has already chosen the baby's name.

Well you know...
They have this saying, yeah?
Takashi-kun said we don't even need to ask, that it's "gotta be a boy."
No, we don't want to know until it's born, but...

WHAT ARE YOU TALK-ING ABOUT?!
IF you make sure the chick is really turned on, the kid will be a boy...
BAM
!!
IF it is a boy.
W-Well, what's the name, then?
It's the truth, though!!
That's not the problem!!
Hey- Come on, don't tell 'em yet.
Ah... Oh.
Well you see...
What're you getting so mad about?! You on your period or some-thin'?!
OF COURSE I'M NOT ON MY PERIOD!!
...?!

I think the baby might be coming...
I...
Hey, are you all right?!
What's the matter, Kiyomi-san?
Wh?!
Ow!! What the- It really hurts!!

Really?! What do we do?!
Wh wai... HUH?!
WHA?!

Ahhh. I hope she's okay. It's been two hours.
D'you think maybe something might've happened?
Hey, calm down, you. Wandering around pacin' like that does nobody any good.
On the long side, stuff like this can take more than half a day, y'know?
I told you it's okay if you go home, didn't I?
You're too jittery, is all.
You MORON!! Of course I'm gonna wait with you!!
ANYWAY, HOW COME YOU'RE SO FREAKIN' CALM ALL OF A SUDDEN!!
I have plenty of time today, too.
We'll stay with you until the baby is born.

!!
Ah!!

...
Ah... You called them.
Thanks... Kiyomi's parents will be here soon.

Are you an idiot?! Of course ya need one!!
We don't need one right now...
You gotta have one of those when the baby's born, don't ya?!
Oh no, Takashi!! You haven't bought a rattle, have ya?!

I've been filling out applications and all...
No one had to tell me to, I already started lookin'.

Oh hoh, I see.
Huh?! Why we gotta talk about that right now, huh? This really ain't the time or place is it?!
I hope you're on your way to findin' a job, Haruto.
Anyhow, it's already February, right?

Ah... I already got one, though.
You should worry about finding your own job before you get on my case about it!!
And besides, you're gonna be a dad real quick here, so how about you?!
....
-Huh?
....
Yeah. For real.
FOR REAL?!
They gave me an unofficial offer last year in November...
I wanted to work at a company with Foreign capital and they hire real early...

Hey, why didn't you tell me about somethin' so important?!
Well, I was worried about you.
Wow, that's amazing, Takashi-kun!
Nah, it's just luck, really. Luck.

Last year, around the summer, wherever I'd see you, you'd talk about all the internships you'd tried and failed to get, lookin' at me with those dead fish eyes...
It was pretty hard to tell you that I got a job after all that, y'know.

What company is it? There are a lot of foreign capital companies out there.
Ah, it's an insurance company. They have the commercials with the duck.
Oh, I know them! So that's where you got your job...!
....
Oh. I see.

.....
Hm?
What's the matter, Haruto? You got quiet.
Nah, nothin'.
Ah..! Hey, have you called Akari yet? To tell her the baby's gonna be born?
Huh? I can just call her after it happens.
You're so cold !!
Why are you...
You've always been like that, even back in middle school!

Your baby has been born.

Uh, yes?

KACHI-
Yura-saan?

A healthy baby boy.

WOAH!! TAKASHI, HE'S HERE!!
YOUR KID IS HERE!!
Didn't you hear that?? YOUR KID IS HERE NOW!!
Uh.. Uh huh..
I heard. I heard.
Way to go, Yuzuki!! It's so great!!
Wh?
Y..Yeah, but I'm not the one who did it, you know...
Come on in, new father.
Would you like to meet your child for a little bit?
Ah..
For real?
Hehe. I'll take a phone pic for you guys, then.
T.. That ain't proper Takashi!!
What's wrong with it..?

Y-Yeah!
I'm so glad the baby was born safely.
KACHK

What're you, dumb?! When someone's becomin' a father, it's normal to get this worked up!!
You're just too excited, Haruto-kun.
He's too dang chill!!
His own kid bein' born and he's sittin' there chattin like nothin's even goin' on at all!
But anyhow, what's with Takashi, that jerk.

Uh huh.
Come on.
Take a seat.

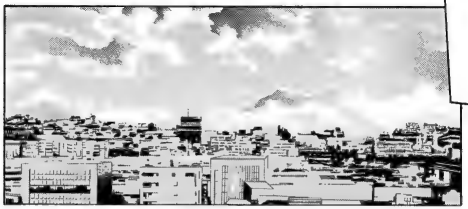
Pardon me, but please be quiet in the hospital.
Ah, whoops, sorry.

So... What do we do now...?
Do we go visit Asakura?
Heyyy, got the pic!
KACHK
Take a look at our first-born son.
Wow! I want to see!!
Let me see!!
OF course not, she just gave birth. she doesn't need anyone bothering her...
She's probably really tired, so we should come back later to visit her.
Ah... Right.
I guess that's true...
AHHH!! HE'S SO CUTE!!
Tiny!! He's so tiny!! Even his hands are small!!

Uh, well, I...
If I'd been all alone, I'd probably have totally flipped my lid.
Wh- What for?!
Well... Thanks, Haruto.
...
But when you flipped out like an idiot first...
...For some reason, seein' that calmed me right down...
Huh?
And now... I can finally let myself relax.
No, no. For real though, I'm really grate- ful.
Well sorry for flippin' out like an idiot, jeez...

Ever since I found out she was pregnant...
I've been so worried that the kid wouldn't be born safely, y'know...?
But I couldn't talk to Kiyomi about that...
I tried to tell myself it's all okay, to not think about all the terrible things, and all...
But even then, I'd get these bad feelings outta nowhere...
....
...Takashi.
It's just...
How do I put this...
Now that I finally got to see the face of the kid that was inside her, you could say...
...I'm relieved... It sunk in...
Oh...

HA-
RU-
TO
!!
plip-
plip-
My kid's been born !!
Con-grats, Ta-ka-shi...
...Yeah



Note: Haruto's name is written with a character meaning blue that can be read as both "Haru" and "Sei."

Fwoooosh

Takashi...
I was thinking he's grown up so much that it surprised me...
I guess when you find out that there's something you have to do, you just learn to do it...

Something up?
Oh... Uh...

tmp
Well...
It's just...
I guess so...
....
I really gotta get it together too...
I mean, I've proposed to you and all...
....

-Wh-?
Well, then...
Why don't we have a baby, too?
IF we do, you'll get it together pretty quickly, don't you think?
I... I do want one, just not right now...
You gotta find a job, too, you know!
"Dai" from the second character in Haruno and "ki" from Yuzuki...
How about Daiki?
Well... It might not be a boy, y'know!
It must be a boy, though! Because you always make sure to-
STOP!!
THESE TWO ARE CRAZY IN LOVE
-TO BE CONTINUED!!

THINGS WITH THE JOB SEARCH ARE ABOUT TO BECOME SERIOUS!
BUT WHY'S NAGATO SO IRRITATED?!
Tink
It's still February of my third year of college, so I'm fine.
I'm not really that anxious about it, though...
A town where you live
Nah... But... The real job hunt will be starting here soon, won't it?
It's normal to be anxious about it!
What are you saying?! The early birds have already gotten their job offers!!
.....
I can't wait that long!
I need to get a job at a good company as soon as possible!
Why are you so pressed to get into a good company, anyhow?
Why do you need to know?
Well... I guess I really don't...

But, I mean, all we can do is just keep sending out applications and goin' to interviews, y'know?
There's not much else you can work at...
....
It's fine.
That friend of mine you met ended up letting me come along to an alumni visit.
I met a man who works in HR at Shinsei Electric.
The Story So Far...
Haruto is a college junior from Hiroshima who lives in Tokyo with his girlfriend Yuzuki. Now, he's having a talk about job searching with Nagase, a woman he met at a job fair.
While we were talking, he seemed to get to like me, and said if it were up to him, he'd skip me to the third interview...
Huh...
You sure this guy's all right?
He's a very respectable man! Stop saying weird things!!
Anyway, tomorrow I will personally meet with a recruiter and have an interview at the company.
I'm going to take this opportunity and make sure to make it count!
....
I get it...

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A town where you live
GO FOR IT!!
Kouji Seo
#241 The Weight of Expectations

Excuse me... I'm a student just like you, aren't I?
Yeah...
I figured since you got crazy connections with everyone everywhere, you might know something about it. Mizumoto-senpai.
W-Well, yeah, that's true...
Shinsei Electric?
That said, you never hear anything good about...
...their HR department.
SO YOU DO KNOW ABOUT THEM!!
By 'things,' d'you mean... Uh...
...Uh.
...
You think just doing a duet with a guy can get you to the third interview? I thought you were a grown-up.
They lure out the girls who come to look for a job by telling them, "I can get you to the third interview."
Then they take them to karaoke or whatever and pressure them into things...

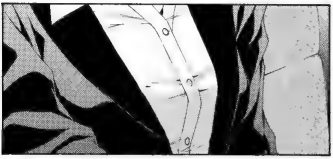
But still, I hear they actually do get through to the third interview.
If the girls are all right with it, I guess it's just another one of those give and take things.
But...
....
More importantly, how's it going for you?
I heard you turned my dad down when he offered to help you out. He never gives out offers like that, you know.
Huh? Well, yeah, but gettin' a leg up like that ain't fair...
....
Just the same as always...
Hey...
Thanks for the info.
I'm gonna get a job and I'm gonna do it my way. I'll be just fine.
tap
tap
tap

I mean, I sent her a text with the info I got from sempai. Just in case.. But I didn't get an answer..
Still, I'm worried about her..
I guess I really am one of those idiots who can't do nothin' right..
I mean, this is the only place near Shinsei Electric that has karaoke places, so..
Hey!
...Ah.
Did you..
...my text..

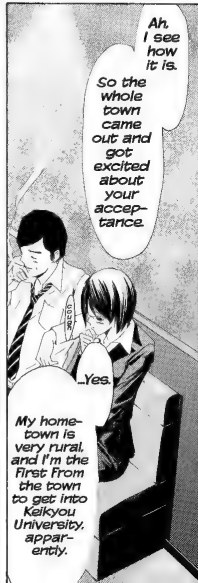
...!
...Ok.
Well then, let's go?
Nagato... You...
....
You know him?
N... No...
I've never met him before.
Ah.
...I guess it's just another one of those give and take things.
If the girls are all right with it...
...would really be steppin' over the line...
I guess doing any more than this...
カラオケ
...

...are expecting a lot of me...
And so a lot of people...

I see. I see...
....



I know how that feels.
...!


Ah, I see how it is.
So the whole town came out and got excited about your acceptance.
...Yes.
My hometown is very rural, and I'm the first from the town to get into Keikyou University, apparently.

Um..
So you have to get into a good company by any means necessary.
N..
IT'D BE NICE IF YOU GOT A JOB...
...AT MY COM-PANY.

....
..Yes.
Thank you for this oppor-tunity..
Slip-
It's all right.. It's all right.. I'll get you to the third inter-view..

WHAT D'YOU THINK YOU'RE DOIN' OLD MAN?!
BANG
Kiri-shima-ku-
Wh-Why are you here?!

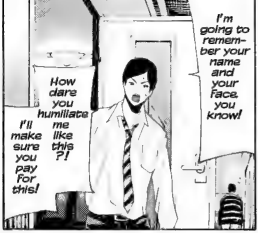
Wait a minute! What're you doing, Kirishima-kun?!
Huh?!
We're going, Nagato!!
grab

This isn't the right way!!
I really can't let you do this!

I'm Haruto Kirishima, a junior at Seijou U!!
IF you've got somethin' to say about this, come at me, anytime!!

....

H. Hey wait!!
Who are you?!


How dare you humiliate me like this ?!
I'll make sure you pay for this!
I'm going to remember your name and your face, you know!

Wait! I'm not...
TAP
TAP
C'mon, we're goin' !!

Just ignore him!
Um...

Look, I'm sorry.
Uh...

Well... This is where I catch my train.
Ah!

...Sorry I butted in like that...

....

B-But.
...even without doing that, you'd still have job opportunities...

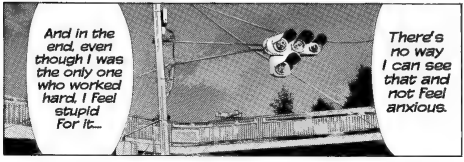
In that case, it's even worse.
Then you're aware that this was none of your business, right?

...
Nagato...

MY PARENTS AND MY FRIENDS CALL AND TEXT TO ENCOURAGE ME EVERY SINGLE DAY. THE PRESSURE IS---!!
YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT THIS MEANS TO ME! I HAVE THE HOPES OF AN ENTIRE TOWN ON MY SHOULDERS...

I thought it would help me get a leg up over the rest when the time came to look for a job!!
I spent three years studying as hard as I could, not joining any clubs! I didn't even go out drinking!
And I worked so hard, wanting to respond to their hopes and expect-ations!
BUT WHEN I FINALLY START, WHAT DO I FIND?!
WHO DO THEY SHOW INTEREST IN? WHO GETS THE JOB OFFERS STRAIGHT AWAY..?
ALL OF THEM ARE IDIOTS LIKE YOU, WHO SPENT THREE STRAIGHT YEARS PARTYING LIKE CRAZY AND WASTING THEIR TIME !!

It's just so unfair...
You can't expect me to be okay with this...


There's no way I can see that and not feel anxious.
And in the end, even though I was the only one who worked hard. I feel stupid for it...

....

...I'm sorry.
I really am... But still...
...I just don't want my friends doin' stuff like that...

Huh?
Just when did you and I become friends...?

I already told you that you're my enemy, Kirishima-kun.
Didn't you hear me?

Ah...
TAP
TAP
I hope you understand this time, and that you won't butt in again.
....

....
CAN HE BE INNO-CENT FOR-EVER
MAYBE NOT... !!
What the heck's with...
...this whole job search thing...?
I really can't let you do this!
....
This isn't the right way!!
-TO BE CONTINUED!!

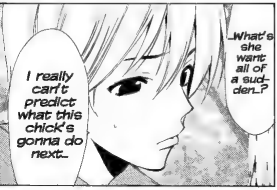
A town where you live
IDLE JOB SEARCHER HARUTO-KUN.
WILL MENDING HIS FRIEND-SHIP WITH NAGATO BE DIFFICULT ?
I hope you won't butt in again.
Didn't you hear me? I already told you that you're my enemy, Kirishima-kun...
....
Eh... She can't see me as anything but an enemy, I guess.
Well, I'll just get outta her way and let her do what she wants t'do.
It's been a whole month since then...
She hasn't contacted me at all, though. Wonder if that chick's all right...
BNNNNN
BNNNNN
Hm -?

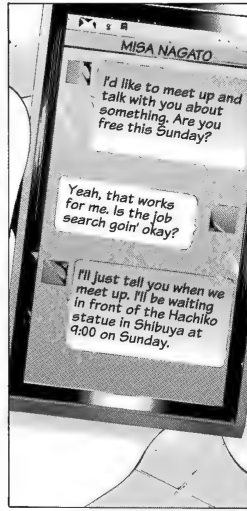
A town where you live

Kouji Seo

#242 A Smile!

The Story So Far
Haruto is a college junior from Hiroshima who lives in Tokyo with his girlfriend Yuzuki Nagato, who he met while job searching, has suddenly gotten in touch with him out of the blue.



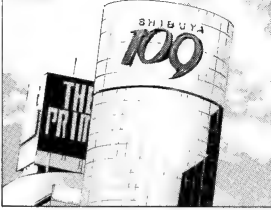

MISA NAGATO
I'd like to meet up and talk with you about something. Are you free this Sunday?
Yeah, that works for me. Is the job search goin' okay?
I'll just tell you when we meet up. I'll be waiting in front of the Hachiko statue in Shibuya at 9:00 on Sunday.

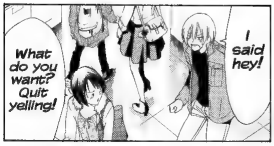
This is a work of fiction. Any resemblance to an existing person, place, or thing is purely coincidental.

This is the first time I've ever been to Shibuya, so I got lost.
...Hm?
Wh...what?
Something wrong?
Nah... I just thought for sure you'd be wearin' a suit.
Wh...Does it look weird?
I didn't mean... I mean it looks good on you or whatever.
...You think so?
Well, all right then...

Oh. Are you wearing contacts today?
You don't have your glasses on.
Oh. the glasses I usually wear are for show.
I think it makes you seem more serious when you look for a job.
..Y- Yer overthinkin' it.
....
SO...
What'd you wanna talk about?
You called me out to Shibuya pretty early to do it. so...
Uh... Well...
...?
First...
There were a few places I wanted to go. Do you mind tagging along?
Well... I guess not.

....


SHIBUYA
109


I said hey!
What do you want? Quit yelling!

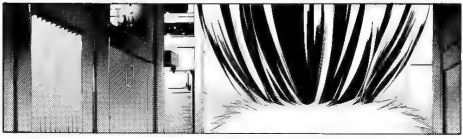
Wowww! They sell such cute clothes here!
Hey.
I should have come here way earlier !!

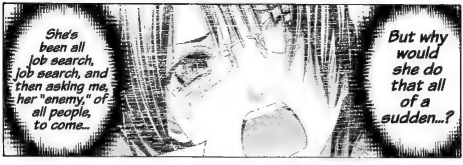
Why do I have to come along on your shopping trip, huh?
I don't really plan on buying anything today.. I'm just doing a little window-shopping.
Either way!!

Huh? Well... Yeah. I've been there.
Hey, Kirishima-kun, have you ever been to Asakusa?
If you don't need me, I'm goin' home!!
You had some-thin' you wanted to say to me, didn't ya?

...
It's so cool!!
Wait, did she just...
...
Wow...!! The Kami-narimon is so huge!!
This is the first time I've ever seen it!!

...call me to drag me around with her, while she has fun?!




She's been all job search, job search, and then asking me, her "enemy," of all people, to come...
But why would she do that all of a sudden...?

....

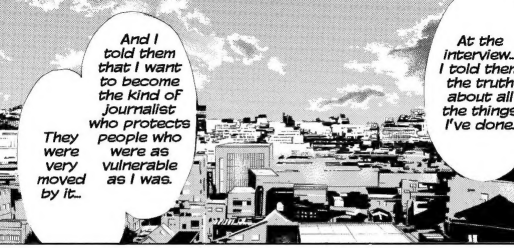
Maybe her job search has started to go so badly, she's just givin' up...
You know...
When I was in High School, I missed the school trip to Tokyo because I came down with a cold.
And when I got into college, all I did was stay behind and study...
...So this is really fun.
Huh...
....
She must be tryin' to make some good memories before she has to go back to her home-town...
Well, you wanna get some lunch and then go visit the Tokyo Sky Tree?
....
Huh...?
I want to go...

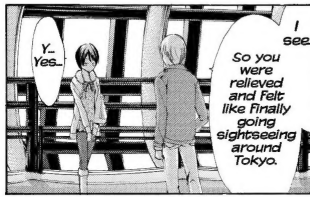
It's so ama-zing !!
Woww !!

...
Hey, I wonder if you can see my house from here!
Yep.
Look how far you can see! Look, Kirishima-kun!!
What do you think?
When you were on the job search, you were always makin' a face like you were mad...
This is the first time I've seen you smile.
You've sure had a big change of heart, haven't ya?
Huh...?

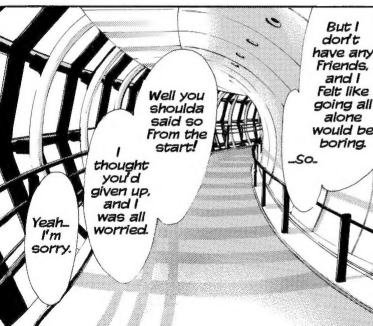
Y...
You think so...?
Well, it's not like I gotta problem with it or nothin'...
It's your life and all, y'know. You were workin' hard to get into a good company and all...
Yes-ter-day... I got one...
A job off-er...
...
Huh?
At the Asahi-kawa News-paper...
And the first thing I wanted to do... was meet you and tell you about it, Kiri-shima-kun...
Huh...! How'd you do it?
You didn't go and do some-thin' weird with an old man again...
Huh?! Of course I didn't, gosh!!

Actually, when I calmed down and gave it some thought, I wondered why I decided to do that in the first place.
Even if I'd gotten the job, I feel like getting it that way would have left me feeling guilty about it forever.
You really saved me back then, I think... I was really moved by it, but...
...I was really embarrassed about you seeing me like that... which is why I said all those terrible things...
...I'm really sorry.
And also...
Thank you...
Uh... Aw, I mean...
Mmh... Well... Good, then! That's a really good company, Asahikawa News...!!


At the interview... I told them the truth about all the things I've done.
And I told them that I want to become the kind of journalist who protects people who were as vulnerable as I was.
They were very moved by it...


I see. So you were relieved and felt like finally going sightseeing around Tokyo.
Y... Yes...

....


But I don't have any friends, and I felt like going all alone would be boring. ...So.
Well you shoulda said so from the start!
I thought you'd given up, and I was all worried.
Yeah... I'm sorry.

But I'm real glad you found somethin'!
You're gonna be a real good journalist, I know it!
Congrats!
...Yeah.
I guess I really gotta get down to business and work hard, too...
....
By the way...
Um...

If you are okay with it...
Would you like to go out with me....?

Hm... What'd you say?

I mean
Um.
I...
....
grip

I... I said I'm definitely going to be a great journalist!
I'm going to cut through the darkness of the job searching process!!
IDIOT!
BUT MAYBE THAT DENSENESS IS ONE OF HARUTO'S CHARMING POINTS?!
Yeah, that sounds great!
I mean, you got real life experience and all, so I bet you can write a real good article about all of it!
J...Jeez! shut up, will you?
We've already talked about this enough, don't you think?!
...TO BE CONTINUED!!